

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

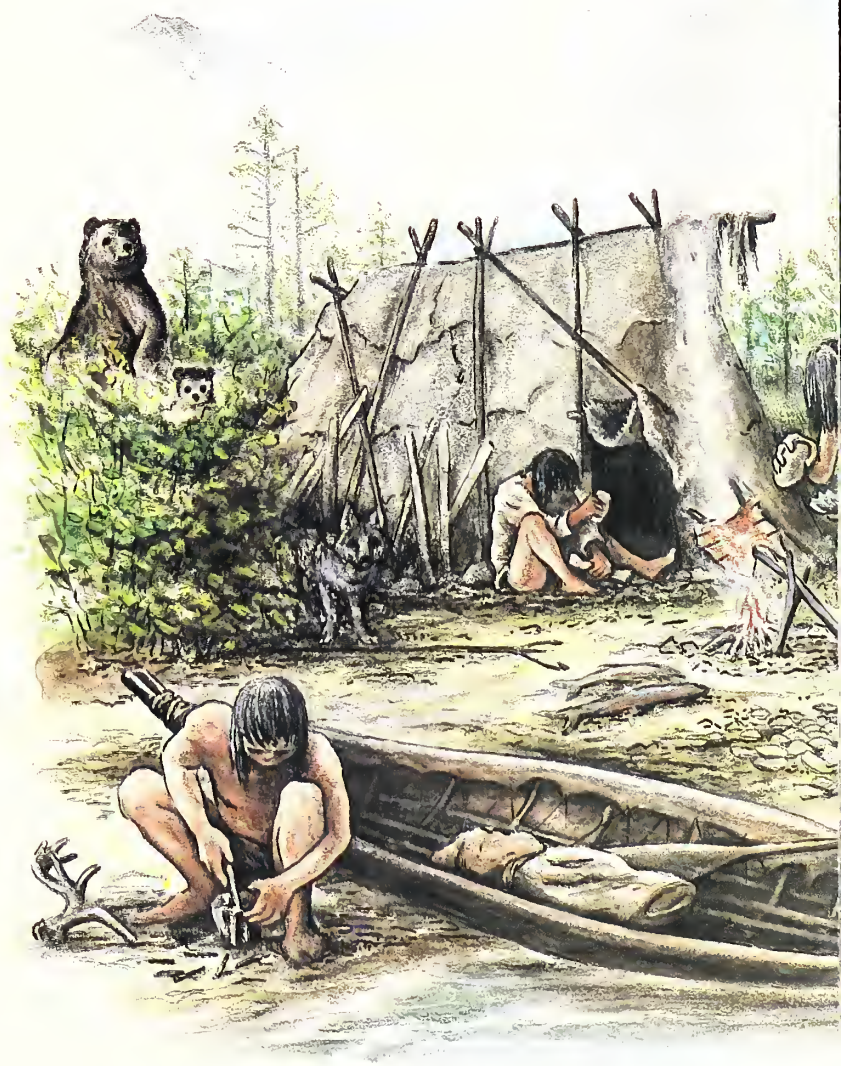
An Archaeology Timeline of Southeast Alaska

The land was there. It had simply changed.

Raven came, releasing the Sun, Moon, and Stars. His cunning creations, the elders say, changed the world...

The earth warmed and the glaciers began to melt. Streams carried silt and gravel out from the glaciers down to the sea, constantly layering new land upon the old. And, even as the seas rose, the earth rebounded, lifting forests of lodgepole pine, hemlock and spruce, and created new beaches.

In this cool dry climate the early maritime people moved out along the newly formed beaches, pursuing seals and sea lions. They hunted with bone harpoons, some tips lined with deadly sharp microblades of obsidian, a natural glass.



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Prepared by
Forest
Service

Alaska Region
R10-RG-48
October 1992



aF906
.M39
1992

PASSAGE

An Archaeology Timeline of Southeast Alaska

TIMELINE

PALEOMARINE TRADITION

10,000 years ago

Sea levels once lowered by maximum glaciation rise with melting of the glaciers. While people could have lived here before, the first evidence is 10,000 years ago. Microblades and cores found at campsites tie early maritime people to Siberian migrations.

8,000 years ago

Evidence indicates people subsisted on clams, fish, seals, sea lions, beaver, deer, and blueberries.

TRANSITIONAL PERIOD

7,000 years ago

Glacial activity crests, fluctuation in sea level and climate. Minimal evidence of people's activity is currently documented.

DEVELOPMENTAL NORTHWEST COAST TRADITIONS

5,000 years ago

The development of a new technology is evidenced by ground and polished stone and bone tools.

3,000 years ago

Specialized subsistence camps marked by fish weirs and large deposits of shell refuse.

2,000 years ago

Heavy house posts and floors signal the use of large houses in permanent villages.

500 years ago

The wide variation in tools such as stone lamps and native copper shows the diverse technologies of the people.

EURO-AMERICAN EXPLORATION AND TRADE

250 years ago

Chirikof and other explorers sail waters of S.E. Alaska. Iron and beads are evidence of early contact. Following Vancouver's charting of inside waters in 1793, trading posts and forts are established. Excavations uncover nails, hinges, knives, axes, bottles, pottery, and structures.

DEVELOPMENTAL INDUSTRIAL PERIOD

130 years ago

Abandoned gear and campsites along the Stikine River mark the first gold rush in S.E. Alaska. Mining and exploration continues. Russia sells Alaska to the U.S. in 1867. Most visible structures from this period are the U.S. Coast Survey lighthouses.

110 years ago

Early canneries represent the development of industrial endeavors. Associated artifacts recall the Asian laborers' contributions to this effort.

70 years ago

With the expansion of the fishing industry and the establishment of new communities, saw mills flourish. Some of these structures remain, but evidence of Russian mills are gone.

Statehood for Alaska in 1959

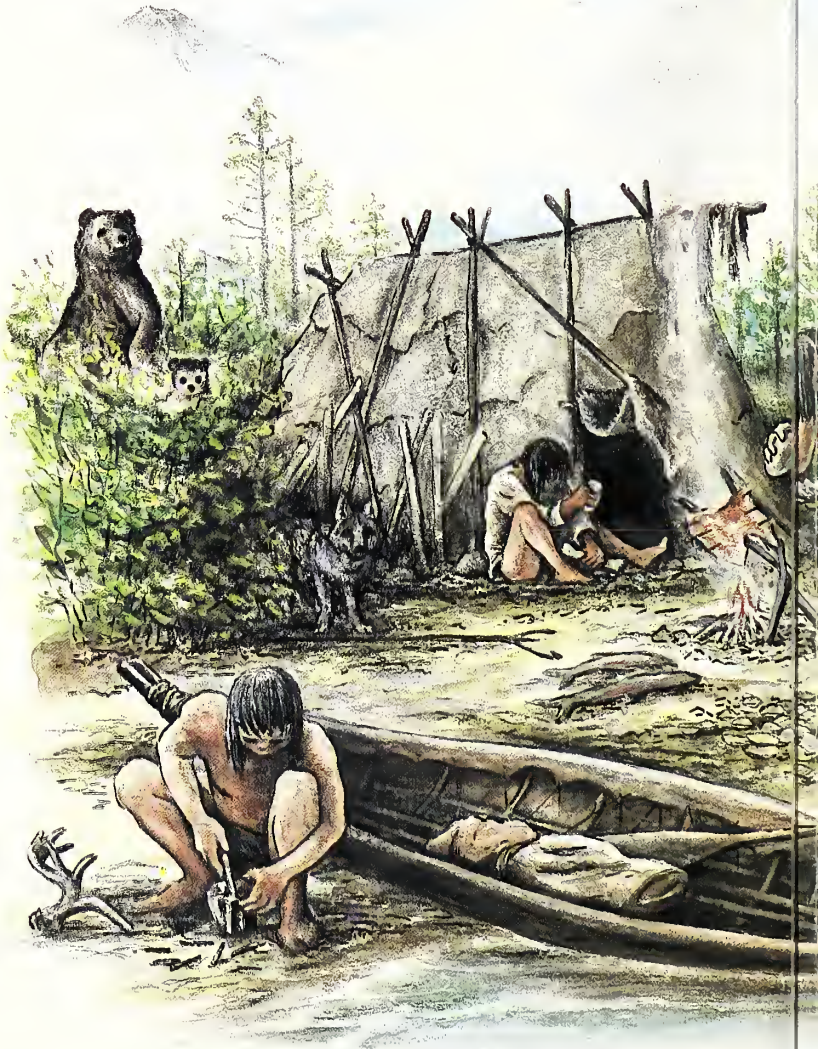
PRESENT

The land was there. It had simply changed.

Raven came, releasing the Sun, Moon, and Stars. His cunning creations, the elders say, changed the world....

The earth warmed and the glaciers began to melt. Streams carried silt and gravel out from the glaciers down to the sea, constantly layering new land upon the old. And, even as the seas rose, the earth rebounded, lifting forests of lodgepole pine, hemlock and spruce, and created new beaches.

In this cool dry climate the early maritime people moved out along the newly formed beaches, pursuing seals and sea lions. They hunted with bone harpoons, some tips lined with deadly sharp microblades of obsidian, a natural glass.



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Prepared by
Forest
Service

Alaska Region
R10-RG-48
October 1992



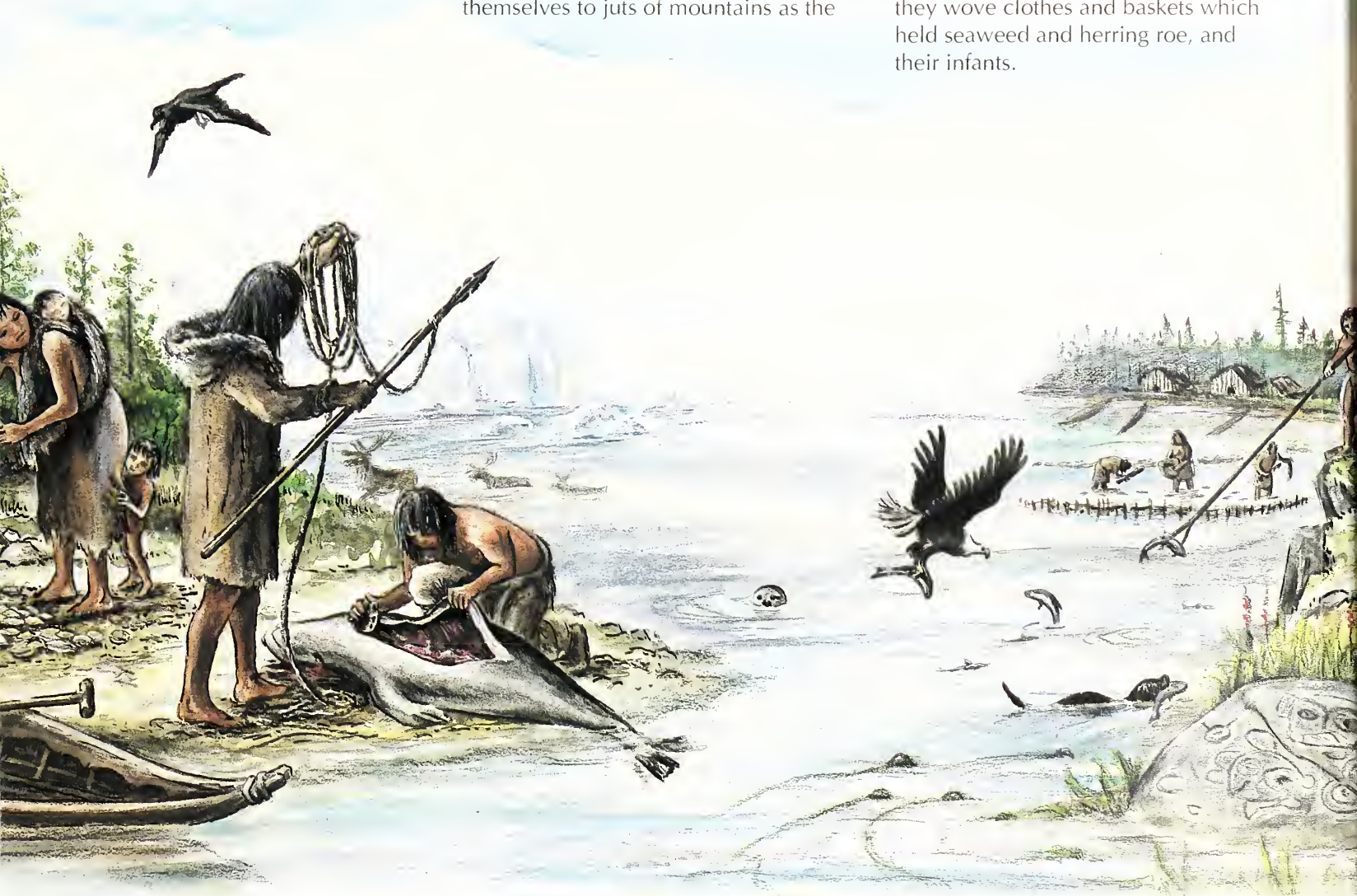
By their fires, families roasted and ate the rich oily meat of seals and fish. Discarded seal and fish backbones remain as links, still connecting past to present, still supporting the strongest evidence that these were early maritime people. Fishing in deep water required boats, and hooks and line, but none of these remain. Blades, pollen, shells, bones and charcoal are the sole reminders of an ancient Siberian tradition.

In a cycle of warming and cooling, glaciers melted and advanced for thousands of years, the land continued to change. What happened to these families? Where did they go? Perhaps they kept moving south, or up the rivers into the interior, or perhaps they remained on uplifted land preciously pocketed between sea and lobes of ice.

The Elders tell in the oral histories of the Flood: that the families prepared for uncertainty, filled seal stomachs with water, and climbed to high stone fortresses they had built. Twisting tree limbs into ropes, they anchored themselves to juts of mountains as the

waters rose and swirled. And when the waters receded, the families came down.

Gradually the natural forces that shaped the islands and mainland valleys began to subside. A cool wet land cradled the cedar; it welcomed the salmon. The families gathered to harvest, building houses to last over time. With greenstone adzes, the men smoothed planks, of cedar to wall and roof their families' homes. With slate and mussel shell knives, the women stripped the bark from the cedar and split the roots of the spruce. With these they wove clothes and baskets which held seaweed and herring roe, and their infants.



PALEOMARINE TRADITION 10,000 years ago

Microblades and cores found at campsites tie early maritime people to Siberian migrations.

TRANSITIONAL PERIOD 7,000 years ago

Minimal evidence of people's activity is currently documented.

Elders tell of migration histories, of families returning to the coast. Some came from the southern coast. Some came out of the interior; and, as they moved down the rivers, they were stopped where the rivers ran under the glaciers. Some families climbed over the glaciers; others went under and they came down to the salt water.

The sea and the land grew rich, and the families harvested at traditional camps. With weirs and traps they gathered the returning salmon. With nets they scooped up the eulachon. Wood and bone hooks brought halibut up from the bottom. Rich red meat

added variety. Sumptuous furs and wools were woven into elaborate robes.

Families grew, creating larger villages with many Big Houses. Some family members, seeking more resources, moved on carrying with them their histories and crests. Within each Big



5,000 years ago DEVELOPMENTAL NORTHWEST COAST TRADITIONS 2,000 years ago

The development of a new technology, the grinding of stone and bone tools.

Heavy house posts indicate the presence of large houses.

House, master artists were hired to carve and paint and weave each families' crests. Ceremonial regalia and coppers, houses and poles, all of these proclaimed each families' prerogatives and magnified the families' crests. And as the winter's darkness settled, invited guests gathered in the Big Houses. In elaborate ceremonies, the hosts brought honor to the families' birthrights.

From the islands to the south, more families migrated northward. As they sailed, they sought good fishing

In 1741, Captain Chirikof sailed into waters near Sitka. Other explorers followed, seeking the Northwest Passage. They traded iron and metal for sea otter pelts. When the merchants of Europe hear of the fur prices, their interests in trading ventures were kindled. Yet, the European traders were dependent on the people's whims and needs: iron or blankets, potatoes or gunpowder, molasses or cloth. By 1830 the sea otters were depleted and the traders shifted to land mammal furs.

Of all that had been introduced disease was the most devastating. Smallpox killed thousands; it tore families and the villages apart. Identity with one's mother's kin and the recognition of one's and birthrights remained.

Russia's sale of Alaska to the United States increased western development in the region. People from all parts of the world came to Alaska to seek their



250 years ago EUROAMERICAN EXPLORATION AND TRADE 130 years ago

Explorers seek the Northwest Passage.
Items which were traded include iron and beads.

Russia sells Alaska to the U.S. in 1867.

fortune, to see the sights of the new frontier, to build homes and to invest in business. Commercial fish traps spread along families' traditional fishing areas. Miners extracted gold and marble, copper and zinc.

Government regulated the resources. Lumber mills sawed the timbers for continual construction. Fox farms sprang up on small islands. Houses perched on beach pilings and bedrock slopes. Towns grew.

The fishing industry kept crews working through winters and into the long summer days. These were the foundations of our commerce today.

And Raven tried to make People out of a Rock so they would not die and a Leaf so that they would change. Rock was too slow. So People were created from the Leaf. It was light, it was quick, it changed....



110 years ago DEVELOPMENTAL INDUSTRIAL PERIOD 70 years ago

With the expansion of the fishing industry and new communities, saw mills flourish.

Statehood for Alaska in 1959.

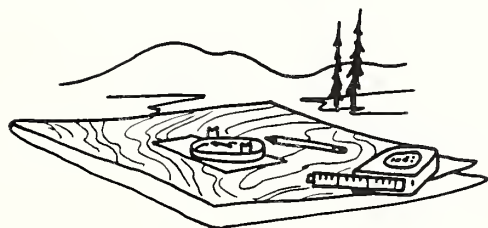
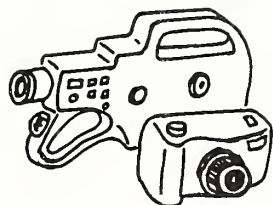


1022307103

WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF OUR PAST?

PASSAGES gives a glimpse of S.E. Alaska's past 10,000 years. But, much is still unknown and many questions are yet unanswered. If we are to know more about each small passage, we all must act responsibly and thoughtfully towards sites and artifacts.

Federal and Alaska state law protects artifacts and sites from vandalism and looting. The removal of any artifact, whether historic or prehistoric, is against the law. But, laws are not enough. We all must take an active, positive role to preserve the sites, artifacts and information for future generations.



HOW CAN I HELP?

Become a steward for our past!

FIVE STEPS OF STEWARDSHIP

1. Leave pieces of the past where you find them. If the object can clearly be seen, cover it up with some brush making it less visible.
2. Photograph or videotape what you have found. Take a picture of the object. Include a common object such as a coin, a hand, or a person in the photo for size reference. Photograph the surrounding area as part of what you record.
3. Locate what you have found on a map. Make a sketch of the area showing the location. If you have a compass and a measuring tape, measure distance and directions from landmarks. Note these on map or nautical chart.
4. Talk to local person, collecting more history. In order to record more information, keep a written or taped record of what people tell you.
5. Call an archeologist to officially record your find. Keep a watchful eye for any vandalizing; report it immediately!

Forest Service archeologists:

Juneau: 586-8729
 Ketchikan: 225-3101
 Petersburg: 772-3841
 Sitka: 747-6671

Alaska Office of History and Archaeology: 762-2622

National Park Service, Alaska Region: 1-800-478-ARCH

We wish to express our appreciation for the time and knowledge given by the following persons: Cecilia Coon, Ruth Demmert, Lydia George, Bill Holm, Mike Jackson, Norman Jackson, Mark Jacobs Jr., Clare Peratrovich and Dr. W. Soboleff; and the following agencies: The State of Alaska's Department of Education; Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence; Department of Natural Resources, Office of History and Archaeology; The Alaska Division of Tourism; Petersburg Writers Group; Seattle Art Museum; Sheldon Jackson Museum; and University of Alaska SE.

Art and illustrations by Marilyn Jesmain. Text written by Nan McNutt.

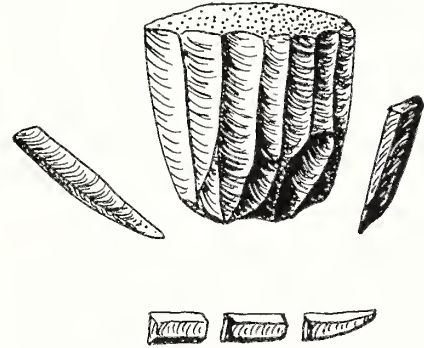
TECHNOLOGIES THROUGH TIME

Over the span of 10,000 years in Southeast Alaska, tools and the methods of production have undergone changes. Archeologists, in their study of past people and their cultures, use changes in technologies to identify the passage of one culture to another.

TRACKING PEOPLE BY THEIR TOOLS

Microblades and Cores

Microblades, tiny blades with parallel sides and a triangular cross section, are pressed from a core of stone, usually obsidian. The distinctive shapes of microblades and cores are used by archeologists as time markers. Their presence in an excavation is an indicator that the site is of the Paleomarine Tradition. Archeologists speculate that the blades were imbedded into a shaft of bone, antler, or wood to form an efficient knife or lance.



Microblades and core

The distinctive shape also helps in other ways. By comparing microblades and cores in Southeast Alaska with other geographical area such as Siberia, cultural similarities can be established. Thus, this technology helps to trace possible routes of people's migrations.

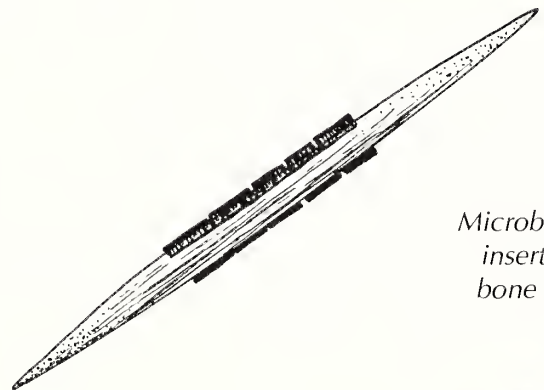
INDEPENDENT INVENTIONS

Ground and Polished Tools

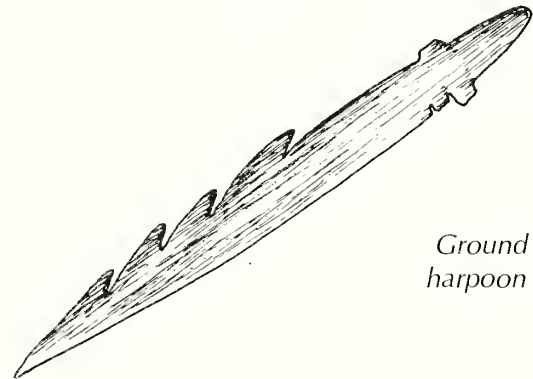
5,000 years ago the people of Southeast Alaska began grinding bone and stone to form tools. Both materials were rubbed on a sandy stone called an abrader to form the desired shape and sharpness. Bone barbed points, perhaps used as harpoons, are examples of this technology and representative of the early Developmental Northwest Coast Traditions period.

Adzes are also representative of this technology. These tools, used to remove large flakes of wood, were sawed with a thin sandy stone from a hard stone such as nephrite, and finely polished. The adze is found in greater abundance during the later period and was eventually made from iron.

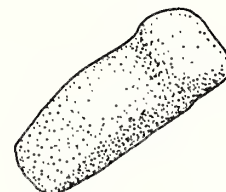
Because the grinding technology appears along the west coast around 5000 years ago, it can not be used to trace migrations of people. It is considered, like so many inventions that happen at the same time, a simultaneous independent invention.



*Microblades
inserted in
bone point*



*Ground bone
harpoon point*



*Ground stone
adz blade*

QUALITIES OF A MATERIAL

Metal tools

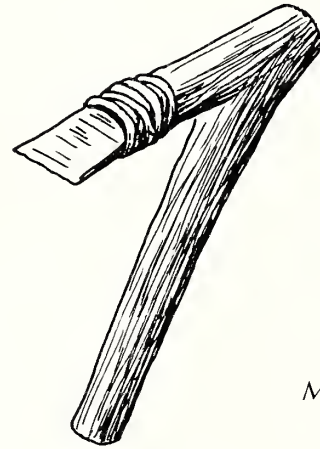
World wide, grinding stone preceded the production of metal tools. Here in Southeast Alaska, too, the working of metal without heat, called cold hammering, follows the technology of grinding. Native copper was formed into ornaments, tools, and ritual objects. As iron drifted in on Asian shipwrecks and pieces of wood, it was cold hammered and ground into adzes, knives, and fishing and hunting points.

During the earliest part of the Euroamerican Exploration and Trade period, the most popular materials traded were forged iron and copper items. These were reformed by cold hammering into desired traditional tools. The metal smiths aboard trading ships altered iron into twisted bracelets designed after the native copper bracelets.

The desirability of iron was not that it made a sharper tool, but that it was malleable and held together under stress. Stone was desired for its sharpness, but the brittle materials would not hold up to prolonged use.

As the technology of metals progressed world wide, steel with desirable qualities - malleable, high strength, hard, durable - replaced iron and stone tools. During the early Developmental Industrial Period in S.E. Alaska, tools such as mining drills, double handled draw saws, axes, and fish cutting blades were in wide use. These artifacts are frequently found in historic archeological sites.

Tools and the technologies are the creation of people's efforts to adapt and invent for their needs. The tools which remain in most archeological sites have resisted decay. They represent only a small fraction of people's artifacts, but those that have remained help archeologists interpret people's adaptations and inventions through the passages of time.



*Metal adz blade
With handle*



Copper Bracelet



Double handled draw saw